Monumentality and Mobility in Mughal Capitals

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FROM THE MID-SIXTEENTH through the early eighteenth centuries, the Mughal empire was the predominant political power of South Asia, ruling over a maximal territory of 3.2 million km^2 and a population estimated at between 100 and 150 million (Richards 1993:1). The Mughals were the heirs of a half-millennium-long tradition of central Asian conquest of northern India. Babur, the Chaghatai Turk ruler of Ferghana (modern Uzbekistan) and the first Mughal conqueror, claimed descent from both Timur (Tamerlane) and Chinggiz Khan (Richards 1993:6, 9). Mughal military strategies, political structure, and urban form owed much to central Asian traditions, though under innovative leadership the Mughal period saw the development of new organizational forms that were uniquely South Asian, produced from a creative manipulation of indigenous Muslim and Hindu traditions. In this paper, I will focus on the form, distribution, and symbolic content of Mughal capitals, in which some of the many sources of Mughal history and culture were expressed.

THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL

In a recent review, Amos Rapaport has defined the major characteristics of capital cities (1993). Although acknowledging considerable variation among individual cities, Rapaport has defined capitals (or what he has called "traditional" capitals) as a class of cities characterized by: (1) a strong and enduring administrative and economic centrality, (2) a position at the apex of a settlement hierarchy, and (3) a high investment in symbols of national identity, status, and power, with a concomitant allocation of significant resources to the production of such symbols. In this symbolic dimension, capitals are often perceived or constructed as "cosmic centers" (*axis mundi*) that form "... an essential component of the system of authority of the ruler ..." (Rapaport 1993:32). Further, capitals (1) are loci for the exercise of control—over coercive power, economic resources, and decision making; (2) have exceptionally wide interests or scope in comparison with other cities; and (3) play a primary role in the organization of territory. Rapaport distinguishes among dispersed capitals, where the political/ideological center(s) is isolated from other settings of social and economic life, and compact capitals, where political, residential, and economic activities are nucleated. In either case, capitals can be centered on specific points in space or on material or sym-

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bolic foci whose spatial location can shift over time. For example, if the capital is defined as the location of a particular sacred image, or sacred ruler, its location is dependent on the presence of that symbol and need not be tied to a specific place on the landscape.

Embedded within Rapaport's description of capitals are two important dimensions of concern to archaeologists. The first is that of the capital as place or "artifact," a physical location with measurable dimensions and content. The tenets of central place theory, commonly applied in regional archaeology of complex societies, suggest that capitals or "highest order centers" should be both geographically central and larger in size than other sites in a regional settlement system. Archaeologists have relied on interpretations of both scale and centrality in developing interpretations of site function and extent of influence over other settlements in a regional system. The second dimension relevant to the consideration of early capitals concerns the distinctive kinds of activities or behaviors that define a location as a center of rule. These include the administrative, economic, and ideological practices (many of which may yield material traces) associated with and constitutive of political power and dominion.

In many contexts, capital as place and capital as locus for activities of control may be synonymous. As the Mughal example presented in this paper illustrates, however, this is not necessarily the case. The Mughals constructed multiple capitals, used sequentially and simultaneously, and also conducted much of the business of empire in mobile imperial camps. In some respects, the Mughal capital as locus of activity can be seen as synonymous with the location of the Mughal ruler, whether in a mobile camp or in a large constructed "capital" city. This example highlights the complex and dynamic relations between political centers and political actions that can occur in contexts of rapidly changing military, political, geographic, economic, and ideological conditions. The Mughal case suggests that archaeologists interested in studying dimensions of power in complex societies should draw explicit distinctions between spaces and activities of domination.

MUGHAL CAPITALS: MONUMENTALITY AND MOBILITY

Among the most striking features of the Mughal capital is how many there were. During the roughly 200 years of Mughal ascendancy in South Asia,[1] six emperors ruled from five cities, as the seat of imperial power shifted from Agra to Delhi to Agra to Fatehpur Sikri to Lahore to Agra and back to Delhi (Table 1, Fig. 1

TABLE 1. MUGHAL IMPERIAL CAPITALS

CITY	EMPEROR
Agra	Babur (1526–1530), Akbar (1560–1571, 1598–1605), Jahangir (1605–1627), Shah Jahan (1628–1648)
Delhi	Humayun (1530–1540, 1554–1556), Akbar (1556–1560), Shah Jahan (1639–1658, Shahjahanabad), Aurangzeb (1658–1677)
Fatehpur Sikri	Akbar (1571–1585)
Lahore	Humayun (1540–1554, following defeat by Sher Shah Sur), Akbar (1584–1596),
Mobile capitals	Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Aurangzeb (1681–1707)

Fig. 1. The Mughal empire and its major capitals (solid line depicts imperial borders in 1605; dotted line depicts borders in 1707).

[Noe 1984:15]). At times, two centers served as simultaneous capitals (e.g., Delhi and Agra or Agra and Fatehpur Sikri [Bernier 1968]). Other sites, such as Aurangabad in the northern Deccan and several places in Kashmir, were utilized briefly as capitals or as short-term imperial bases. Massive tent cities (discussed below) that accompanied the emperor on military and diplomatic campaigns constituted even more mobile administrative centers and bases of military operations.

This highly peripatetic pattern persisted even when a single place was defined as the capital. For example, although Agra was the official capital of Akbar for 36 years of his nearly 50-year reign, he was absent from the city for a total of 22 years (60 percent of the total period). Similarly, Jahangir was absent from Agra for a total of 14 years of his 22-year rule (Gupta 1986:88). Although it is not uncommon for imperial rulers to move frequently in response to emerging political and military

conditions, the pattern of shifting capitals in the absence of military defeat or other catastrophes is rather different from what we are familiar with in many other historic empires, such as Rome or, a little closer to home, the Vijayanagara empire of southern India whose first capital was occupied continuously for more than 200 years (Morrison and Lycett, this volume).

In this paper I consider both the form of Mughal imperial capitals and some of the factors that may have underlain this practice of shifting or mobile capitals. I argue that a variety of factors was at play, including (1) responses to local political, military, and logistical conditions that affected imperial stability; (2) economic and demographic factors that allowed for such prodigious use of human and material resources and such conspicuous displays of imperial wealth; and (3) ideological factors—in particular, attempts by rulers and their dependents to symbolically equate the king's person with the empire and the desires of individual rulers to define and materially represent their centrality to imperial structure and stability. Data examined in the paper derive from published archaeological research and a variety of primary and secondary documentary sources.

The Imperial Camp

The most dramatic example of the Mughal mobile capital was the imperial camp. Originating in the small highly mobile military camps of Babur, the elaborate later imperial camp was established by Akbar in the late sixteenth century and was used by all subsequent Mughal rulers (Fig. 2 [Blake 1991:97]). Two main categories of camps existed: small ones used on short journeys or for hunting parties, and large camps constructed for royal tours and military expeditions (Abu al Fazl 1978). By the late seventeenth century, these large camps contained up to 300,000 individuals (Ansari 1963; Blake 1991:100; Bernier 1968:381). From them, the emperor and his administrators carried out the main business of governing their vast empire. The imperial camps were neither short-lived nor occasional phenomena. Blake (1991:97) has calculated that from 1556 to 1739 Mughal emperors spent nearly 40 percent of their time in camps on tours often lasting a year or longer.

The imperial camp, also known as the exalted or victorious camp (Begley and Desai 1990), was constructed according to a formal plan, described as a mobile version of Akbar's capital of Fatehpur Sikri (Richards 1978:259). A large wall of cloth screens enclosed the royal camp, forming an east-west oriented rectangle nearly 1400 m long. The emperor's tent and royal reception areas were consistently placed in the center of the eastern end of the royal enclosure. His was the only two-storied tent in the imperial camp, enclosed within walls of distinctive scarlet cloth. Next to the emperor was a screened area containing the tents of the royal harem; beyond this were enormous awnings for public and private royal audiences. Tents for nobles were aligned in carefully specified locations that spatially expressed their relations with the ruler. Beyond the royal enclosure were the tents of lesser nobles and the military, as well as administrative facilities, stables, arsenals, workshops of attached specialists, and kitchens. Merchants and moneylenders formed neat bazaar areas along the streets of the massive tent city. Imperial coinage was issued from the camp mint. During Akbar's reign, low-value copper coins recorded the name of the town nearest the imperial camp.

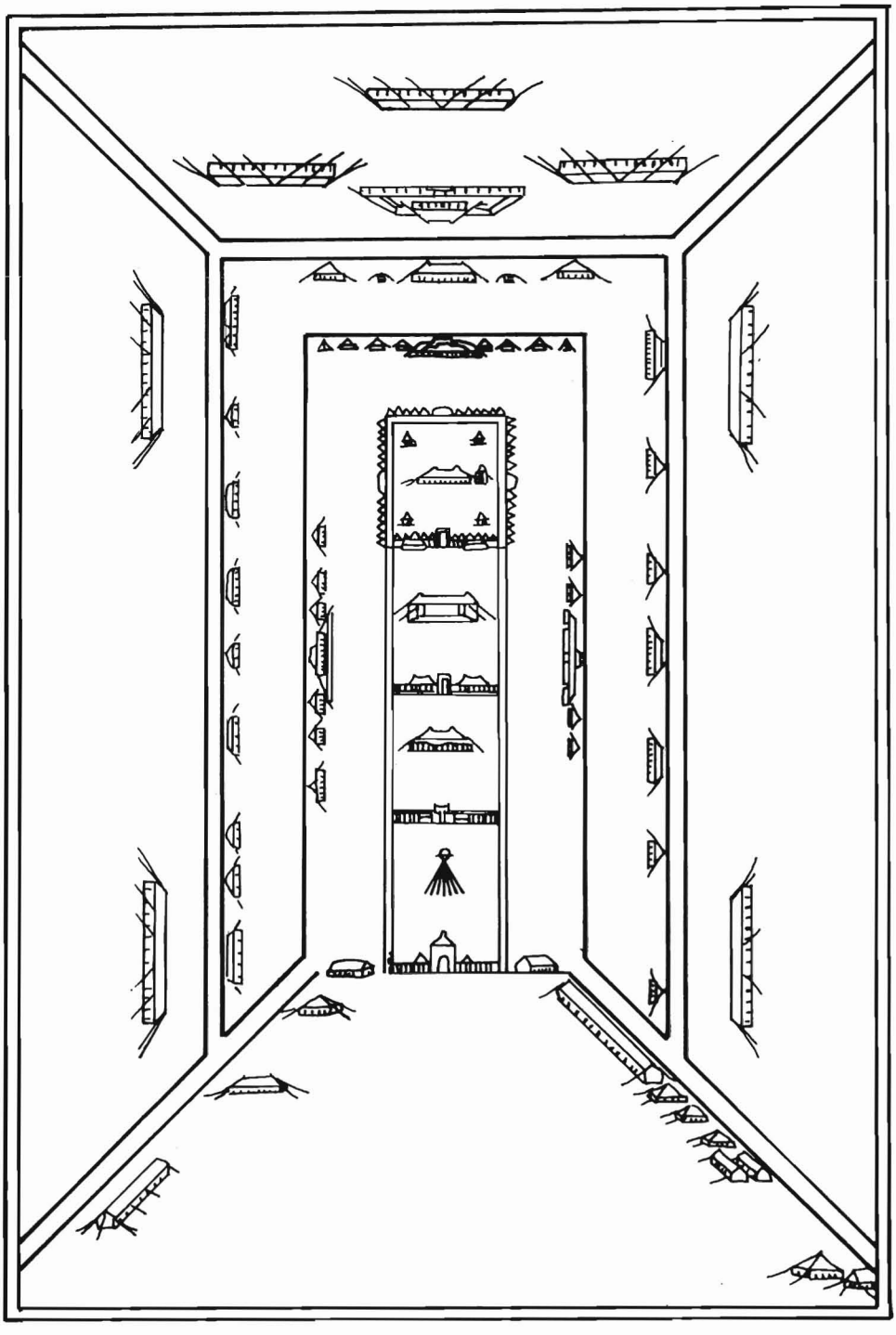


Fig. 2. The imperial camp (after Blake 1991:94).

Inscriptions on gold and silver coins were explicitly linked with the camp itself, first containing the phrase "Struck At The Camping Grounds Of Good Fortune," and by 1591–1592 inscribed "Seat of the Caliphate" (Richards 1978: 259–260), attesting to royal acknowledgment of the centrality of the imperial camp.

The logistical challenges of moving and provisioning hundreds of thousands of people and the c. 50,000 horses and oxen required to transport tents, baggage, and equipment were considerable (Irvine 1991:102–110; Raychaudhuri 1982: 173). Far from a rapid military strike force, the camp seldom traveled more than 16 km per day (Ansari 1963:19) and was preceded by royal agents, scouts, and laborers, who prepared roads and bridges, selected campsites, arranged the purchase of foodstuffs and fuel, and assured the cooperation of local rulers. The camps were constructed by more than 2000 soldiers and laborers sent on ahead of the main imperial party; two complete sets of all tents and facilities were thus required (Richard 1978:259). Local merchants and farmers were encouraged to bring their produce to the markets at the camps; foodstuffs may also have been obtained from imperial or civic stores in towns near the camp sites.

When the emperor was resident in his camp, it was there that the bulk of imperial administrative activities occurred and important decisions were made. The imperial camp was the de facto capital, and a significant portion of the resident population of the constructed capital cities appears to have accompanied the emperor in his travels. The seventeenth-century French traveler François Bernier (in South Asia from 1656 to 1668) stated that the entire population of Delhi resided in the camp during its deployment, because all derived their "employment and maintenance from the court and army" (1968:381). Although this is an overexaggeration (Gupta 1986), it does confirm the status of these camps as political capitals and short-term demographic centers.

The mobile imperial camp no doubt played many roles in Mughal political and economic life. It made possible the movement of enormous military forces throughout the empire and to strategic areas where imperial control was weak or threatened, while simultaneously providing facilities and personnel for essential administrative activities. The massive display of imperial grandeur of the encampments and of the formal marches must have had considerable impact on subject populations. Rather than a distant or seldom-seen figure ensconced in a protected capital, the Mughal emperor and his royal household could be seen and venerated (or feared) by large segments of the population as his camp traveled through imperial territories. Although the pattern of movement appears to have been largely determined by political and military concerns, a further consequence of the imperial camp was to bring large numbers of people and animals to available resources, thus decreasing the costs of transporting foodstuffs and fuel to the cities.

Imperial Cities

Turning now to the more formal constructed capitals of the empire, we see considerable variation in the degree to which individual rulers invested in the construction of cities. Babur, the first Mughal ruler and the one most closely connected to his Central Asian birthplace and Timurid ancestry, preferred to re-

side in the open (Asher 1992:20). Although he ruled first from Delhi and then from Agra, his major constructions consisted of gardens, built in the cities and throughout his realm. Asher (1992:20–21) has suggested that these transformations of natural landscapes to cultural ones provided a potent metaphor for his imperial rule. This form of metaphor may have been a particularly appropriate one for Babur, born in Central Asia, whose main exposure to urban life had been in Iran and Samarkand, where the Persian concept of the paradisial garden had been highly elaborated. This Iranian-derived garden, as well as Central Asian Timurid architectural forms, especially of tombs, were important elements of Mughal cities throughout the duration of the empire. These "foreign" elements were merged with indigenous Hindu and Muslim elements to create a new form of architecture and urban place by the two greatest builders among the Mughal rulers, Akbar and Shah Jahan. Both of these rulers sponsored extensive building programs, adding to existing cities and building entirely new cities to serve as their capitals.

The massive constructions sponsored by these kings occurred in periods of significant administrative, social, and ideological changes and cannot be viewed apart from this broader context. Akbar ruled from 1556 to 1605, during which time he expanded and solidified the empire through conquest and wide-ranging administrative reforms. Akbar explicitly sought to institutionalize a "new concept of kingship" (Streusand 1989:14), one focused on the "ideal society," with its king, the "light of the world," at its center. Though a Muslim, Akbar invented rituals entailing royal solar worship, and the symbol of light and its royal source became extremely important during his reign. Further, Akbar encouraged nobles to worship his own person through a system of formal discipleships, again something quite divergent from traditional Islamic practice (though less alien to contemporary practices of devotional Sufism [Blake 1991:48; Richards 1978:253]). Akbar's policies, coupled with his considerable personal charisma, created a new metaphor of empire—one in which "the Emperor's person ... (was) an embodiment of the Empire" (Richards 1978:253). Akbar's cities, especially Fatehpur Sikri, materially expressed the worldview that he was actively creating (Petruccioli 1985:354).

Akbar began his reign in Delhi, as a child of 12 in 1556; in 1565 he shifted his capital to Agra and renamed the city "Akbarabad." Although Agra had been an important political center before Mughal ascendancy, Akbar's major constructions began with the creation of a "clean slate" through the destruction of the pre-Mughal fortress. Construction of his new walled city (the core of which is now known as the Red Fort) lasted 16 years, costing a total of 3.5 million rupees and reportedly involving 4000 skilled masons, as well as numerous sculptors and artisans (Asher 1992:49; Gupta 1986:12).

Akbarabad was a planned city, consisting of a walled fortified royal enclave, built on an elevated hill along the banks of the Yamuna River. Beyond this lay a walled residential zone (the walls were rapidly breached as the city grew) and a more dispersed zone of gardens and elite residences, extending out from the city along the Mughal road system. The city grew rapidly; sixteenth-century European visitors estimated its population at 200,000. By the reign of Shah Jahan in the mid-seventeenth century, estimates are as high as 700,000. The royal center of the Agra fort was monumental, deliberately constructed to create an "awe-

some sense of Akbar's power" (Asher 1992:49), and more than 500 buildings were constructed during Akbar's reign (Richards 1993:27). Akbar's move from Delhi to Agra has been attributed to a variety of motives, including his desire to disassociate himself from the power and interference of the traditional elites of Delhi and to "put [his] establishment of a new form of kingship in stone" (Streusand 1989:92–93).

By 1571, 16 years after construction at Agra was initiated, Akbar began the construction of a new imperial city—Fatehpur Sikri, located 37 km west of Agra along the Mughal highway or "royal corridor" that connected Agra to Gujarat (Brand and Lowry 1985:44; Rizvi and Flynn 1975:8). The area was the site of an important Sufi shrine and had long historical connections to the Mughal dynasty (Brand and Lowry 1985:40).

Fatehpur Sikri is the most dramatic physical expression of Akbar's concept of kingship and his genius, and he is believed to have been intimately involved with the planning and construction of the city (and is reported by one of his chroniclers to have personally assisted in quarrying stone for its construction [Brand and Lowry 1985]). Fatehpur Sikri conforms to Rapaport's (1993) definition of a dispersed capital; it was in large part a political stage, utilized by the king and court while the bulk of economic and military facilities remained in nearby Agra (though this changed somewhat over time as the site began to assume greater economic functions). The site was occupied for 15 years and then abandoned, as Akbar shifted his capital to Lahore, in a region beset by political instability, and ultimately to the mobile camp, in which he spent most of the remainder of his reign.

Documentation of Fatehpur Sikri was initiated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1899 and has continued sporadically since then (Gaur 1990). In 1982, a large-scale excavation and documentation project oriented largely to verifying historic descriptions of the city was undertaken by the ASI and Aligarh Muslim University. Results of this work have appeared in a series of brief reports and articles (Gaur 1990; J. P. Joshi 1990:71–75; M. C. Joshi 1990:103–105; Nagaraja Rao 1985:89–90; Tripathi 1987:80–85). Although much of the once bustling city is now buried, the remains of Akbar's c. 10-ha walled palace complex are extant and contain more than 100 buildings of red sandstone and marble. The palace complex incorporated the city's great public mosque (the Jami Masjid) and the tomb of the Sufi saint, Shaikh Salim, who was a spiritual advisor to Akbar and had predicted the birth of his sons. The royal residence and person are thus linked both to Muslim orthodoxy and to Sufi mystic traditions (Richards 1978:255). Architecturally, the city was a unique and stylistically cohesive blend of Persian, Indo-Muslim, and Hindu elements, constructed on an elaborate grid (Petruccioli 1985:356).

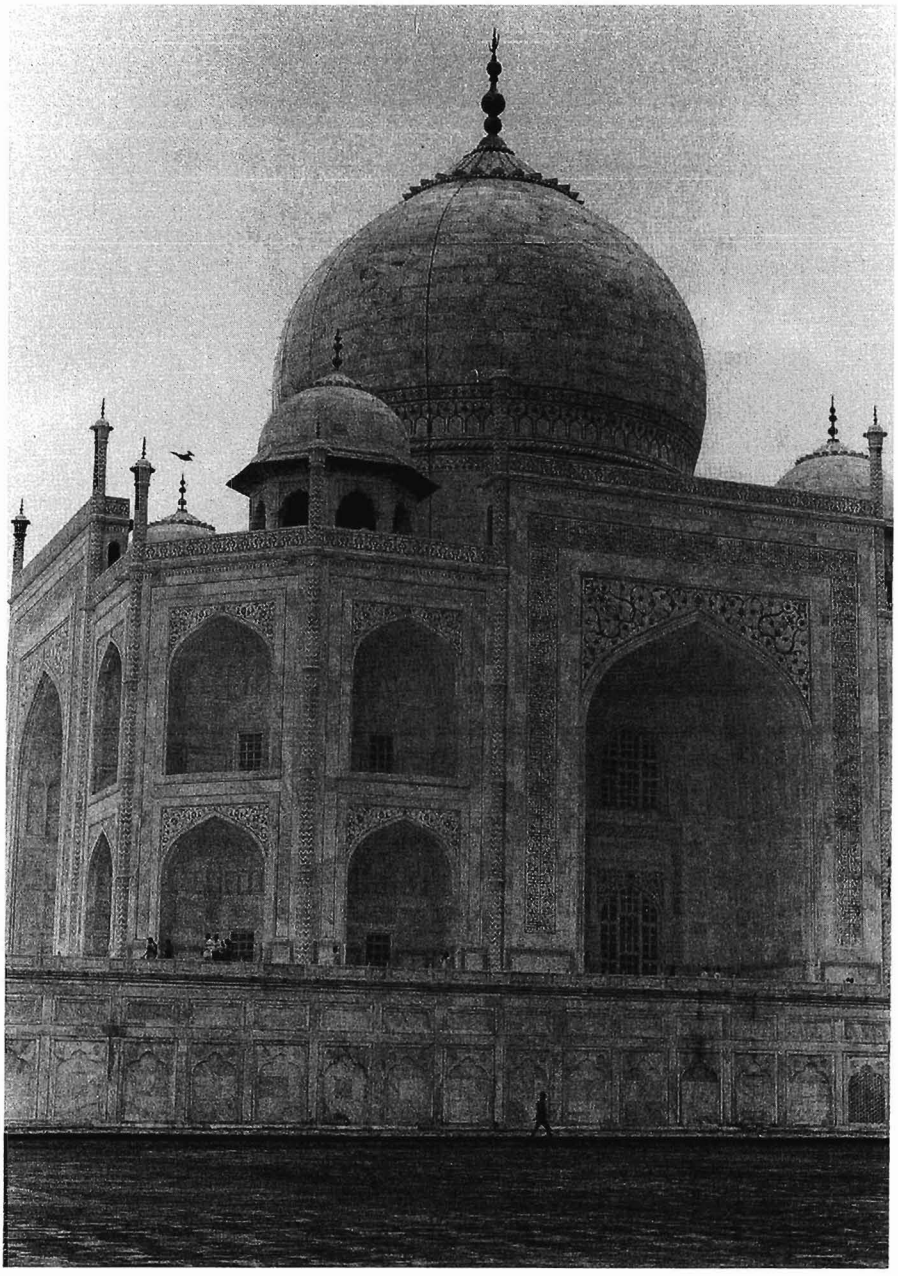
The dramatic remains and the brief history of Fatehpur Sikri have intrigued archaeologists and historians for more than a century. The city has been viewed as power run amok or "Akbar's whim" and, more convincingly, as both a strategic fortress in which potentially recalcitrant nobles could be isolated from the sources of wealth and power in Agra and other economic centers of the empire (Richards 1987:66), and the physical manifestation of an emergent concept of kingship and empire (Brand and Lowry 1985, 1987; Hambly 1982:445; Petruccioli 1985; Richards 1987). Beyond the city itself, a striking example of the latter

is seen in the elaborately carved column with radiating brackets and throne platform that dominates the center of Akbar's private audience hall (the Diwan-i Khas); it was from this column (whether atop the platform or at its base is unknown) that Akbar conducted the most important business of the empire (Richards 1978:256).

Akbar's immediate successor, Jahangir, was not a builder of cities, though he did construct gardens and sponsor the arts, especially painting, and developed increasingly formalized court ceremony. An opium addict, Jahangir ruled for only 12 years, during which he shifted his capital several times by moving into existing cities without initiating substantial construction (Richards 1993:101). His successor, Shah Jahan (1628–1658), was the other great builder of cities of the empire, though he is perhaps best known for the construction of a tomb for his queen (Pl. I). Shah Jahan began his reign in Agra and considerably modified Akbar's fortress (Fig. 3 [Asher 1992:182]). As a result, very few of Akbar's constructions currently exist. Shah Jahan was a more traditional Muslim than Akbar, and during his reign Islamic orthodoxy increased.

In 1639, Shah Jahan initiated the construction of his new capital, Shahjahanabad in Delhi, to the north of earlier settlements; in so doing he brought the Mughal capital back to the traditional center of Indo-Muslim rule (Blake 1986:154; Hambly 1982:446). Along with its political significance, Delhi was a major religious center of Muslim India, containing the tombs of numerous saints (Blake 1991:28–29). Blake (1991:29) has written of Shahjahanabad: "the capital city was located at the center of the kingdom, the palace-fortress at the center of the city, and the throne of the king at the center of the universe." A sophisticated canal system brought water to the fort and the city's many gardens (Noe 1984). Suburban settlements extended several kilometers beyond the walled city, with the broader urban landscape consisting of a complex of dispersed settlements, royal tombs, elite mansions, and caravansarai, set amid formal gardens.

The two main architectural foci of Shahjahanabad were the royal palace fortress and the city's major mosque, the Jami Masjid, then the largest mosque in South Asia (Pl. II). The fortress (or "Red Fort") was a walled enclosure, c. 460 by 920 m in dimensions, with its main axes aligned to the cardinal directions (several times the size of Akbar's fortresses at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri [Noe 1981:13]). The designers of the royal palace incorporated the many strands of Mughal architectural traditions in its layout and structure, with Iranian influences especially pronounced in city structure (Noe 1981, 1984). Local Hindu and Muslim masons and sculptors, as well as numerous Persians and some Europeans, were involved in its construction. The complex contained royal residential structures, areas of royal reception and administration, and gardens. Unlike Akbar, Shah Jahan did not construct his mosque within the palace,[2] but situated it c. 460 m to the southwest. This massive monument is located on top of one of the city's two hills and dominates the surrounding markets and residential zones. Nonetheless it was the palace, the royal residence, that was the center of the empire. This is manifest in the words of Shah Jahan's chronicler, who noted that "its four walls ... enclosed the center of the earth" (Blake 1991:30) and in an inscription on the entry arches of the private audience hall in which sat Shah Jahan's famous Peacock Throne: "If there is paradise on the face of the earth; it is this, it is this, it is this."



Pl. I. The Taj Mahal, Agra. Royal tomb constructed by Shah Jahan (completed 1643). Photo by K. D. Morrison.

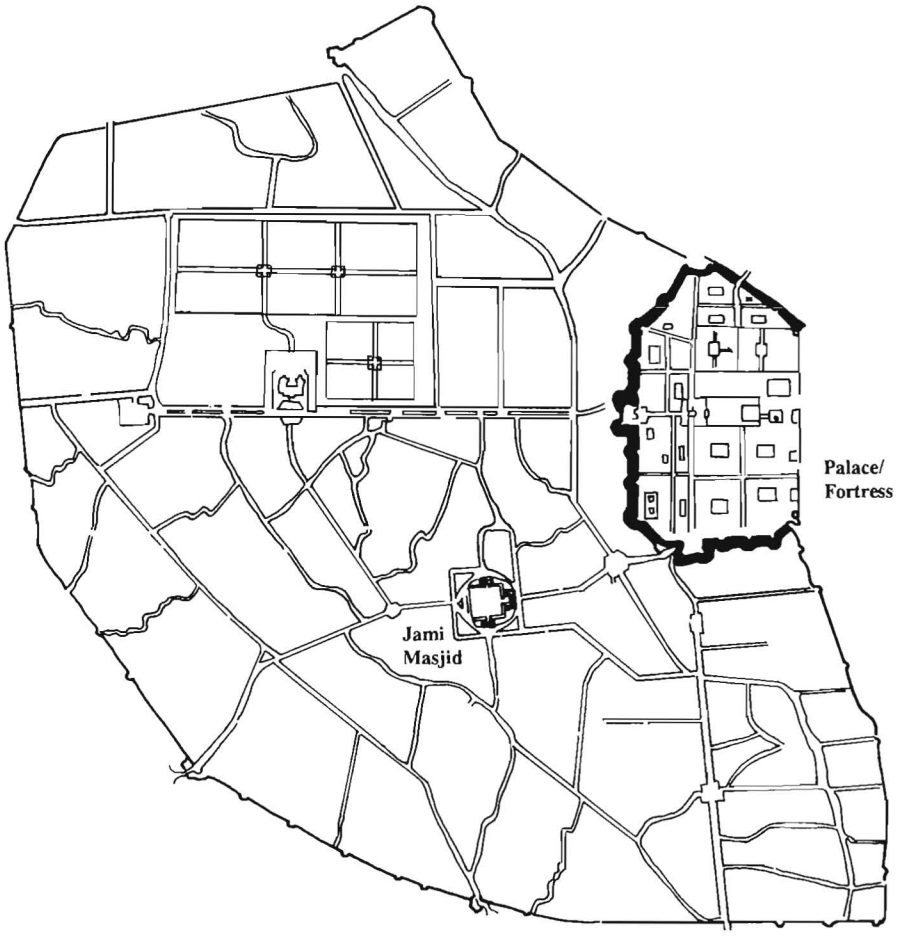
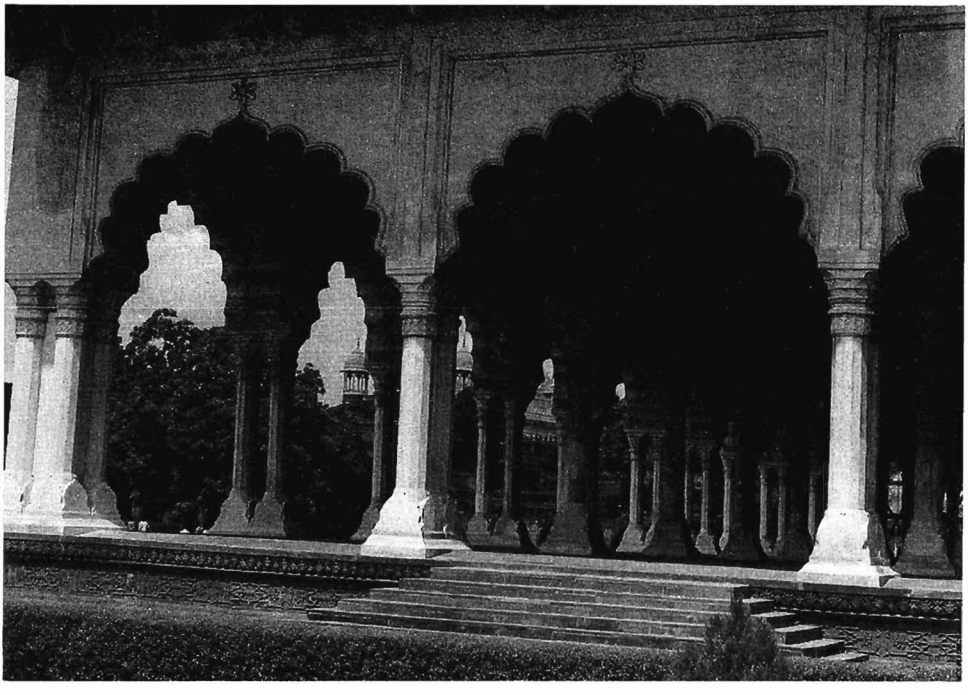


Fig. 3. Shahjahanabad (after Blake 1991:72-73).

DISCUSSION

The multiple imperial capitals that I have discussed in this paper constituted a complex urban landscape in the "royal corridor" at the core of the Mughal empire. Throughout the duration of the empire, Mughal imperial authority was not centered at a single place but at a variety of massive urban centers whose physical remains provide evidence of temporal and symbolic variation within a coherent style of architecture and urban form. Although I have focused on imperial capitals, it is important to note that imperial investment in construction was not limited to these sites; rather, rulers sponsored a wide variety of constructions in rural and urban contexts throughout the empire, including fortresses, tombs, mosques, waterworks, gardens, and palaces.

The construction of new capitals is not restricted to the Mughal empire, but is found in other early empires and states (e.g., the capital of Akhenaten in Egypt). Liverani (1979:309) considered the import of this practice in the Neo-Assyrian



Pl. II. Akbarabad: View of Shah Jahan's public audience hall. Photo by K. D. Morrison.

empire of the second and first millennia B.C. in the Near East. Liverani shares with Rapaport a view of the imperial capital as cosmic center and sees the construction of a new capital as "the apex in the action of the creator king" (1979: 309), occurring as it does in the center of empire and, thus, in the center of the world. The new imperial capital redefines the center as a product of the king who sponsored it and situates that ruler in a privileged position in relation to his predecessors. For the Neo-Assyrians, Liverani suggested (1979:309), the significance of the construction of a new capital was second in symbolic value only to the act of world creation by the gods.

The significance of Mughal building activities can be situated in this broader framework of imperial strategies for expressions of power and legitimation. However, the unique historical conditions and trajectories of the Mughals must also be considered to account for the large number of capitals and the frequency of imperial movement. Motivations for the construction of new capitals and the relocation of administrative activities derived from specific political and military conditions throughout the empire and in its core, as well as from economic and ideological factors. Military instability and the location of major military campaigns contributed to Akbar's shift to Lahore, as well as Aurangzeb's move to Aurangabad, and the use of the imperial camp. Factionalism and competition among Mughal elite also seems to have played an important role in the shifting of capitals. Akbar's moves to Agra and to Fatehpur Sikri have been linked with attempts to alienate elites from the traditional seats of power and wealth. That such moves were considered necessary provides evidence for the existence of sig-

nificant competition and resistance to imperial rule within at least certain segments of Mughal society.

The scale and lavishness of construction of Mughal imperial capitals also provide ample evidence of the considerable resources that individual Mughal rulers and associated elites had at their disposal. The construction of imperial cities and other buildings depended on the continued availability of substantial wealth, acquired through conquest and taxation, as well as the ability to mobilize massive labor forces. Although investment in construction was substantial, Habib has estimated that Akbar's expenditures at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri amounted to a very small proportion of the annual income of the imperial household (i.e., less than 5 percent), derived from agrarian production, trade, and extractions from nobles (Habib 1987:74; Raychaudhuri 1982). By far the largest proportion of imperial resources was expended on the support of the massive Mughal military structure (Habib 1987). In one sense, the construction of capitals entailed the expenditure of "surplus" funds and the availability of resources above and beyond what was needed to maintain imperial security and provide for imperial expansion. In another sense, the investment in capital cities was a crucial dimension of structures of imperial authority and control.

Stephen Blake has characterized the Mughal empire as a patrimonial system, with its political and economic structure revolving around the royal household. In his research on Shahjahanabad, Blake has viewed that capital as the patrimonial household writ large (Blake 1979, 1991). Although this perspective may understate the significance of the elaborate military and economic infrastructure of the empire, it does highlight the significance of the king and his imperial household and provides an approach for examining the internal organization and form of the various cities I have discussed. Drawing both from Blake's perspective and from Rapaport's view of the centrality of capitals, the pattern of construction of new capitals by individual Mughal rulers may be viewed as a physical extension of the political and symbolic authority of the ruler, as well as a means of distinguishing a ruler from his predecessors. The selection of locations for the capitals of Shah Jahan and Akbar was affected both by ongoing political and economic conditions and by the historic and cultural significance of particular locales, whether the Sufi shrines of Akbar's Fatehpur Sikri or the historic resonances of Shah Jahan's capital at Delhi. Although cities may have been built on previously unoccupied ground, they were also in areas that had important significance to the ruler and empire.

Mughal imperial capitals were products of multiple cultural and historic traditions, and of the complex political, economic, and ideological processes that constituted the empire. At a more general level, the shifting capital may be seen as a mechanism for dealing with the fluidity and near-constant conflicts that characterize many imperial societies, as well as the logistical difficulties inherent in ruling over very large and diverse polities (Sinopoli 1994). This paper is intended largely as a descriptive exegesis of the Mughal pattern of shifting capitals and of the consequent dramatic historic urban landscape preserved today in the Agra-Delhi-Lahore region of India and Pakistan, and I hesitate to draw any sweeping conclusions from this small study. The rich historic evidence from the Mughal period does, however, allow us to distinguish between the monumental urban spaces constructed as capitals and the activities of rule. As archaeologists we are

skilled at recognizing the former; this paper may help to illustrate the complexities of considering the latter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. Although Mughals controlled Delhi until 1858, the period of effective Mughal territorial rule ended during the reign of Bahadur Shah (1707–1712). In this paper I focus on the period from 1526 to 1707, the reigns of Babur (1526–1530), Humayun (1530–1556), Akbar (1556–1605), Jahangir (1605–1627), Shah Jahan (1628–1658), and Auranzeb (1658–1707).
2. Though his successor, Aurangzeb, later build the Moti masjid, or pearl mosque, within the fortress.

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ABSTRACT

The Mughal Dynasty dominated much of northern India from the early sixteenth through the early eighteenth centuries. For most of this period, Mughal rule was

centered in the Delhi-Agra region, where rulers constructed a number of capitals and forts. The Mughal imperial capital was not a single urban center throughout this period, but a series of capitals within the broad imperial core, as individual rulers constructed or sponsored massive urban centers and monumental structures. In this paper I examine the relations between Mughal kingship and the changing centers of imperial power, through an examination of the form and sequence of the several Mughal capitals, including Fatehpur Sikri, Shahjahanabad, and Agra. KEYWORDS: South Asia, Mughals, empires, capitals.